

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL BOMBAY FVI

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 0224

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IN

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT OPENS PARLIAMENT WITH REVIEW OF ESTABLISHED
GOI DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY

REF: NEW DELHI 0155

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT AHMED'S OPENING ADDRESS TO THE LATE WINTER
SESSION OF PARLIAMENT WAS LARGELY A REHASH OF ESTABLISHED
GOI POSITIONS ON DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY. HE VIGOROUSLY
JUSTIFIED MRS. GANDHI'S EMERGENCY, AND PRAISED THE RESULTS.

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INDIAN PURITY VIS-A-VIS BANGLADESH WAS UNDERSCORED. TIES

WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND COMMUNIST EASTERN EUROPE WERE CALLED WARM AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL. THE GOI DESIRE FOR A MATURE AND CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES WAS AFFIRMED. AHMED SAID NO LONGER NEEDED INDUSTRIAL CONTROLS WOULD BE DROPPED. HE GAVE ATTENTION TO EXPANDED IRRIGATION PLANS, IMPROVEMENT OF THE LOT OF THE POOR, AND RENEWED FAMILY PLANNING EFFORTS. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED SET FORTH THE GOI'S PROGRAM IN THE CUSTOMARY POLICY SPEECH TO BOTH HOUSES AT THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT ON JANUARY 5. THE PRESIDENT WELCOMED THE NEW REPRESENTATIVE OF SIKKIM AND PROCEEDED TO SPIRITED JUSTIFICATION OF THE EMERGENCY, RELATING THE ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PAST YEAR TO THAT "FIRM AND DECISIVE ACTION."

2. AHMED DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE TIME TO ECONOMIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE PAST YEAR: THE SUCCESSFUL FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION

(WHOLESALE PRICES WERE NOW 10 PERCENT LOWER THAN THEIR PEAK SEPTEMBER 1974 LEVEL); INCREASED PRODUCTION AND SUFFICIENCY OF SUPPLIES; AND LABOR PEACE. HE NOTED THE RECENT SETTLEMENTS OF WATER DISPUTES BETWEEN STATES, PARTICULARLY FOR THE GODAVARI RIVER BASIN WHICH COVERS TEN PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S LAND AREA.

3. REGARDING THE GOVERNMENT'S FUTURE PLANS, THE PRESIDENT STATED THAT INDUSTRIAL LICENSING CONTROLS THAT ARE NO LONGER NECESSARY WILL BE REMOVED IN ORDER TO INCREASE PRODUCTION IN PRIORITY AREAS AND WIDEN COMPETITION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR. OUTLAYS FOR THE 1976-77 ANNUAL PLAN WILL BE INCREASED TO MODERNIZE KEY SECTORS, SUCH AS TEXTILES AND SUGAR, WHICH PRODUCE MASS CONSUMPTION GOODS. ACCORDING TO AHMED, THE GOI PLANS TO INCREASE IRRIGATED AREAS BY 5 MILLION HECTARES BEFORE 1979. HE SAID THAT THE 20 POINT PROGRAM WOULD "CONTINUE TO BE IMPLEMENTED VIGOROUSLY" IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE POOR. THE PRESIDENT ALSO SET OUT A GOVERNMENT GOAL OF REDUCING WITHIN THREE YEARS THE BIRTH RATE TO 30 PER THOUSAND (PROVISIONALLY ESTIMATED AT 36 PER THOUSAND IN 1973) BY MEANS OF A MASS FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM.

3. TURNING TO FOREIGN POLICY THE PRESIDENT DEALT AT SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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LENGTH WITH BANGLADESH, REITERATING THE GOI'S REGRET AT THE ASSASSINATION OF SHEIKH MUJIB, BUT REAFFIRMING THE GOI POSITION THAT INDIA HAS TREATED DEVELOPMENTS IN BANGLADESH ENTIRELY AS AN INTERNAL AFFAIR OF THAT COUNTRY. THE PRESIDENT ADDED THAT CONSEQUENTLY INDIA WAS DISTRESSED BY THE FALSE PROPAGANDA THAT IS BEING CARRIED OUT IN SOME QUARTERS. AHMED CONTINUED: "IN RECENT TALKS BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES WE HAVE REAFFIRMED OUR DESIRE FOR A PEACE-

FUL BORDER AND A STABLE, STRONG AND INDEPENDENT BANGLADESH IN WHICH THE INTEREST AND WELFARE OF ALL SECTIONS OF ITS PEOPLE ARE SAFEGUARDED BANGLADESH EMPHASIZED ITS DESIRE TO CONTINUE THE POLICY AND ENSURING EQUAL RIGHTS TO ALL ITS PEOPLE IRRESPECTIVE OF CASTE, CREED AND RELIGION."

4. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE REGRETTED THE SLOW PROGRESS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SIMLA AGREEMENT, EXPLAINING THAT PAKISTAN HAD DELAYED MATTERS BY ITS DISAPPOINTING RESPONSES AND CONTINUED EFFORTS TO MISREPRESENT INDIA. OTHER NEIGHBORS, BHUTAN, NEPAL, SRI LANKA, AND BURMA WERE MENTIONED BRIEFLY AND IN A POSITIVE VEIN. LINKS WITH INDONESIA, AFGHANISTAN, AND

IRAN WERE ALL SIMILARLY PORTRAYED IN A FAVORABLE LIGHT. INDIA'S PRO-ARAB POLICY WAS REAFFIRMED. SOUTH AFRICAN "INTERVENTION" IN ANGOLA WAS CONDEMNED. (NO MENTION WAS MADE OF ANY SOVIET OR CUBAN ROLE IN THAT COUNTRY.)

5. TURNING TO EUROPE AHMED SAID: "INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND COUNTRIES IN EASTERN EUROPE ARE CHARACTERIZED BY A SPIRIT OF WARM FRIENDSHIP, UNDERSTANDING AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL COOPERATION IN A WIDENING VARIETY OF FIELDS. THESE COUNTRIES HAVE CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED INDIA ON ALL ISSUES OF VITAL CONCERN. IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS A NUMBER OF HIGH LEVEL VISITS HAVE BEEN EXCHANGED AND I VISITED HUNGARY AND YUGOSLAVIA. IN EUROPE, THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION MARKS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THE CONSOLIDATION OF PEACE. THIS SPIRIT OF DETENTE SHOULD EXTEND TO OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD WHERE CONFLICT AND TENSION PERSIST. OUR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AS WELL AS RELATIONS IN THE FIELDS OF TRADE AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WITH THE EEC AND OTHER COUNTRIES OF WESTERN EUROPE HAS CONTINUED TO EXPAND."

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6. THE PRESIDENT AFFIRMED THE GOI'S DESIRE FOR A "MATURE AND CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA." A SERIOUS EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE FOR UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER WITH A VIEW TO STRENGTHENING PEACE, STABILITY AND CO-OPERATION.

7. THE PRESIDENT CLOSED WITH A WARNING THAT THE NATION MUST REMAIN VIGILANT IN VIEW OF THE UNCERTAINTIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND THE CONTINUING CHALLENGE OF THE FORCES OF DISRUPTION AT HOME. ON YET ANOTHER TOPIC HE ADDED THAT THE ENTIRE NATION HAS PLUNGED INTO SORROW BY THE UNPRECEDENTED TRAGEDY AT THE CHASNALA COLLIERY.

8. COMMENT: WE ARE TOLD THAT 19 MPS ARE CURRENTLY UNDER DETENTION (9 LOK SABHA, 10 RAJYA SABHA). MPS ARE STILL COMPLAINING ABOUT THE CENSORSHIP OF THEIR REMARKS IN PARLIAMENT.THERE ARE MANY MPS WHO HAVE NOT TURNED UP THUS FAR FOR THE SESSION--PERHAPS AS MANY AS 20-25 0/0--BUT THERE ARE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THIS REFLECTS A LARGER NUMBER OF MPS UNDER DETENTION THAN THE FIGURES GIVEN US BY PARLIAMENT OFFICIALS OR A PURPOSEFUL BOYCOTT. IT MAY, HOWEVER, REFLECT A GREATER DEGREE OF INDIFFERENCE OR BOREDOM WITH THE PROCEEDINGS. WE MET ONE OPPOSITION MP LEAVING PARLIAMENT 30 MINUTES AFTER IT STARTED. HE SAID HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED IT TO COME AT ALL BUT OTHER OPPOSITION MPS THOUGHT THEY SHOULD ATTEND.

9. BIHAR MP BALARAM BHAGAT WAS ELECTED SPEAKER OF THE LOK SABHA ON NOMINATION BY THE PRIME MINISTER. BHAGAT, 53, IS A FORMER MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMERCE AND FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF INDIA'S UN DELEGATION IN THE PAST. HIS NOMINATION BY THE PM REFLECTS HER CONVICTION THAT HE WILL NOT MAKE WAVES. WE HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT HER JUDGEMENT.
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